

## **National Centre for Good Governance**

Good Governance Webinar Series – 3 dated December 11, 2020

### **THE EVOLVING ROLE OF DISTRICT COLLECTOR**

#### **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome to Shri C.K.Mathew, former Chief Secretary Rajasthan and Smt. Rajni Sekhri Sibal former Secretary in Government of India to the NCGG's Good Governance webinar series discussion 3, on the **Evolving Role of District Collector**. Both have had long and distinguished careers in Personnel / Revenue Administration in the Indian Administrative Service. Shri C.K.Mathew served 5 years as District Collector at Barmer and Collector Bhilwara, and 5 years Secretary to Chief Minister and then Chief Secretary Rajasthan. Smt. Rajnia Sekhri Sibal has served 2 years as District Collector Rewari, 5 years Deputy Director (Senior) LBSNAA and Director General HIPA in addition to serving as Secretary to Government of India. Let me also inform all participants that Shri C.K.Mathew is a visiting Professor of Aziz Premji University, has undertaken the massive task of documenting a 5 volume series on the many faces of the District Collector, the first volume of which has been published in 2020. His seminal effort has brought forth the pre-eminence of the District Collector in Indian Administration for over 100 years. Smt. Rajni Sekhri Sibal is an author and orator of considerable repute.

I extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished participants in this webinar – senior faculty of Public Administration from leading Universities of India and District Collectors from Aspirational Districts of India and faculty of the NCGG. .

Before I invite the Lead Discussants to present their views, let me introduce you to the subject. The District Collector is the most cherished and exciting job that an IAS officer seeks in a career spanning three and half decades. It's a responsibility that comes early in career, has massive public interface and visibility. It is a job that requires considerable legal knowledge, coordination and leadership skills, ability to work with rural India and crisis management. Further, the institution of District

Collector evokes considerable public trust and decisions are acknowledged to be fair and neutral. My own years as District Collector for 2 years at Pali and Jodhpur were dominated by conduct of 3 elections, drought management, and massive public interface / coordination work that larger districts entail and were amongst the most challenging years of my career. The sheer size of India's districts meant that the work-loads are exceptionally high.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Administrative Reforms Commission examined the gamut of responsibilities of a District Collector – as head of revenue administration, head of executive magistracy, responsible for conduct of elections, disaster management, coordination with line departments, vigilance work, public grievance redressal and improving service delivery. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC recommended that experienced officers should be posted as District Collectors on completion of 10-12 years of service. Further the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC recommended the modernization of the office of the District Collector with process re-engineering and use of information technology, documentation of the best practices/ innovations.

The National Centre for Good Governance has engaged extensively with the District Collectors in 2020, through a series of National/ International webinars. The webinar “Good Governance Practices in a Pandemic in the Aspirational Districts of India” held in October 2020, was attended by 817 officials including 117 District Collectors. In this pandemic, District Collectors have stood at the front end in the battle, and numerous success stories of resilience, courage, sacrifice and conviction have emerged from Districts. In many ways the young officers have shown commitment and maturity well beyond their seniority in providing leadership to rural societies. Several Districts have leveraged technology to fight the pandemic. The new technology practices included use of multiple apps for monitoring developmental schemes, online education, mid-day meals, MGNREGS labor payments, ensuring market linkages under e-NAM, and working with big businesses like Swiggy and Zomato for supply lines.

There is much about the institution of District Collector that needs to be understood by Public Administrators. Documentation has been sketchy and uneven on the subject as it is largely in the form of isolated memoirs. Shri C.K.Mathew's effort to

document the District Collector's journey would be the first comprehensive work on the subject.

With these open remarks, I look forward to listening to our Lead Discussants today. Once again, I thank them for accepting the invitation of the National Centre for Good Governance to participate in the webinar.

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